

SOCIAL ACTION

JANUARY 1953

Pow-wows

Red Secrets

Labour in Travail

A Shelter, Please

Clean and Clear Minds

As. 6

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL ORDER

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SOCIAL ACTION

VOL. 2 No. 10

JANUARY 1953

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HERE AND THERE

The Glum Pow-Wow

The Third International Conference of Planned Parenthood was held in Bombay at the end of November. The big chiefs of the Birth-Control tribe were there in business dress. A few select silent observers were allowed in, but no opponent, no dissenter. The pow-wow had to proceed in glum solemnity; facts and figures had not to be challenged, old conclusions were served out rather than new arguments and no discussion relieved the monotony of repetitious propaganda. It looked like a company business-meeting to push the sales of rubber goods and elastic principles.

A philosopher had strayed into the company and he delivered himself of many platitudes but also of a startling view; he said, in short, that since the campaign for birth-control was to achieve a laudable balance and harmony in economic and social life, it had no ethical or moral implication. It was strange to hear this howler in a country which more than any other has officially insisted on purity of means as well as on purity of purposes. O shades of Gandhiji! The audience did not react to such philosophical perpetration; they had all their self-delivered diploma of competency, they knew what was to be said and they agreed with all that was said. One point they are not

sure about is the way of getting the better of the moral sense of India's masses.

We must expect in the near future an enormous propaganda for birth-control clinics, even at the expense of the local tax-payer, and then a progressive deterioration among the middle-class folks who are already afflicted with *taedium vitae*. But we confidently hope that the Central Government will never give legal sanction to so nefarious a propaganda.

More and More Talks

Bombay was not more lively with the International Conference which followed and discussed child welfare, for the simple reason that the interested party was absent. Pedagogues, dieteticians, and psychiatrists discoursed on diapers and discipline, cane and cod liver, idiocy and idiosyncrasy at their sweet leisure; there was no protester and no dissenter. The kids were away, sleeping in their cots or playing with their bears and dolls, unmindful of adult obstinacy at educating them scientifically. Mummies do it all so much more sweetly!

The Madras conferences were held in a more serene and more lively atmosphere. There was even a certain tenseness in the Sixth International Conference of Social Work; the problems connected with raising the standard of living in South East Asia are more complex and more acute, and hundreds of delegates had gathered from all over the world; many opposed interests and schools of thought were represented; theories and solutions did clash but the tenor of the assembly remained evenly urbane and resolutions were accommodated to the situation and drawn up with tactful chiaroscuro. Nothing unexpected was put forth but the great fruit of these gatherings was a renewed sense of solidarity between the social workers of the world.

Catholic Assizes

With a spontaneity true to their common faith, Catholic delegates profited by the occasion to hold special meetings,

pool ideas and seek efficacy in mutual information and assistance. Indian delegates were introduced to associations like the Catholic International Union of Social Service and the National Catholic Charities of the U.S.A.; they received inspiration and encouragement from the experience of other countries and they trust they were not without making an impression on the eager visitors, thanks to their own contribution and offer of international co-operation.

Diocesan Promoters of social work in India helped by many well-wishers had also discussions of their own; with sane realism they studied concrete proposals on the training of social workers for general or for specialised activities, for arresting a baneful propaganda of various types and for increasing the share of the Catholic community in all national movements for social reform. These meetings will mark a date in the annals of Catholic social work.

Working Youth

The visit of Mgr. Cardijn in India and Ceylon has popularised the J.O.C. association he founded and worked into a world movement. It is useful, however, to note that the JOC (YCW) is first of all a Catholic Action association of a specialised type. If it is to take roots it must remain true to its origins and begin with a solid core of labourers who have the distinctive realism and solidarity of the working class. It is a school for the religious, moral, social, cultural and apostolic education of young workmen. They are articulated to the Christian Labour Movement in economic and social matters and they time their efforts and accommodate their activities in harmony with similar organisations for youths and adults.

They well deserve the encouragement and have all the best wishes from all social workers in India. May God prosper their Christian endeavour!

A. L.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN INDIA

(Continued)

What we have so far seen can be summed up in many, though not all, of its aspects, under the caption, "Study your Chinese lesson". The concentration of Indian Communists on agrarian reform, on the many millions of the peasantry rather than on the few million industrial workers, the greater use of the middle class bourgeois capitalists, but not of the "feudal" large landowners, promises of land for all, the attempt to capture some districts and even States as a base for fanning out over the rest of the country, all these tactics have a close similarity with the Chinese model. We will now go on with the remaining outstanding traits of the Communist Programme.

Religion

There will be "Separation of the State from all religious institutions. The State to be a secular state."⁴⁴ In the debate in the Madras Assembly on a confidence vote, the Communist member, Mr. P. Ramamurthi, objected to the Chief Minister bringing in the name of God because he alleged "the issue of God was not the issue before the Congress and the Opposition, because they were in a secular state." There can be no doubt that Communists interpret this phrase 'secular state' not as it should be, namely, that the State neither embraces nor imposes any particular kind

⁴⁴ *Programme*, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Mr. Uppi Saheb (Muslim League) gave the reason why Muslims were not afraid of the Communists as being that Muslims believed that men were creatures of God and would go to Him when dead. He went on to blame the Government for officially keeping religious instruction out of schools. This, he said, was a blunder because "The whole civilisation of this world is built on the bedrock of belief in God. A State without religion would be a devil's State." (In the Assembly during the same debate.)

of religion on its subjects, while itself respecting the essentials of religion, but that the State has no religious belief at all, i.e., is atheistic.⁴⁵ The Programme does not hesitate to promise "unhampered freedom of conscience, religious belief and worship. . . ." ⁴⁶ The value of such a promise can best be gauged by the violent attacks on religion in all Communist countries ; Communists in India, however, show their usual sound sense of propaganda values when they do not openly attack religion. That is reserved to a later date when they are established in power.

Foreign Influences

Although a large amount of Communist propaganda in the country is against "American Imperialism", the *Policy* directs most of its shafts against British imperialists who by "covering their rule with the mantle of the new Congress Government" continue to hold sway over the country. Hence while Communists claim it was the combination of peasant actions with the strike struggles, the anti-imperialist actions of the petty bourgeoisie and the rebellion of armed forces that forced the granting of independence,⁴⁷ the winning of Independence is elsewhere contemptuously spoken of as "the August 15 transfer of power", and the peasants who after Independence thought they need not attack the Government which is now "our own Government" are referred to as falling "victims to the slanderous propaganda of the ruling class that the Communists are "out to weaken the National Government."⁴⁸

After making the usual tongue-in-the-cheek promise about being ready to collaborate with all to bring about peace, the *Policy* adds : "yet we must not forget that this Government under the influence of imperialist warmongers, landlords and profiteers follows, not a consistent and honest policy of peace but plays between America and England to gain from their rivalries and also plays between the peace-

⁴⁶ P. 14. ⁴⁷ Cf. E. M. S. Namboodribad, p. 8. ⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 12.

loving countries and warmongers.”⁴⁹ Though making frequent claims to free India from imperialism and lead her to real independence, it is to be independence on Marxist lines and allied to the Soviet bloc that the CPI wants, as is clear from the tenor of the following passage: “The people of India led by its working class and its Communist Party, guided by the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, firmly allied with the million-headed peasantry of our land will achieve this programme. The principles and the philosophy of Marxism and the leadership of the Communist Party have lead nearly half of humanity to Socialism, to freedom, to real democracy, at the head of which stands the Soviet Union. The peoples of Asia led by the great Chinese

⁴⁹ P. 11. According to the Communists, the agrarian reformers of the present Congress Government have brought about no change as regards relief of the peasantry because where any seeming improvement has been made, it has exchanged the landlord for the State which continues the two main forms of exploitation: interests and rent. “It is thus clear,” concludes E. M. S. Namboodripad, “that every one of the claims of the Congress with regard to its land legislation is as spurious as its claim to have brought ‘complete independence’ to India.” (P. 46).

After making the usual Communist charges that the Indian bourgeoisie surrendered 1947 Independence to foreign imperialism once again, E. M. S. Namboodripad, in his *Food, Achilles' Heel of Indian Economy*, (Peoples' Publishing House, Bombay, 1952), argues that the acceptance of foreign aid (i.e., non-Communist aid Communist aid always being ‘friendly’) means servitude, and concludes his book thus: “Either, solve the food problem in the way advocated by the ruling class—depending on America for foreign supplies, relying on the landlord and whole-saler for internal supplies, refusing to change land relations and, in the process, leading the country to total economic and political dependence on world imperialism;

“Or, solve it in the way advocated by the advanced sections of democrats—by developing key and heavy industries, bringing about basic changes in land relations, preventing big landlords and whole-salers from getting hold of grain stocks, entering into trade relations with the U.S.S.R. and China, etc.” (P. 62).

People's Democracy are now battling to free themselves from imperialism." ⁵⁰

In a line with the attack on foreign 'imperialism', the *Programme* advocates: "The confiscation and nationalisation of all factories, banks, plantations, shipping and mining owned by the British in India, whether in their own name or under the signboard of Indian companies. Removal of the British advisers in India from the post held by them."⁵¹ Communists sing a different tune when the foreigners are in their favour. In *Ten Principles for Communists in Thailand* it is stated: "7. . . industry should be protected, while foreigners must also be allowed freedom to invest in economic undertakings under conditions of equality and reasonableness." The reason for this statement is that in this case the foreigners are not 'imperialists' in Communist eyes, but the Chinese who are the largest pro-Communist group in the country, whose interests must be protected and fostered because they are Communists to whom national Thai interests are to be subordinated. In India, in its attack on every thing foreign (Russia, China and other satellite countries are 'friendly' powers for our Communists), the CPI finds itself at one with the extreme nationalists whose deep-rooted conservatism in other matters they must attack.

Organisation and Immediate Task

The Party has now set itself the task of steering a path between "left" sectarianism and right opportunism. Against the former error it is now asserted that greater emphasis must be put on agrarian reform and on winning over the peasants. In this attempt, even the rich capitalist peasants

⁵⁰ *Programme*, p. 24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 21. In Burma, as in India, the Government is accused of having sold out to the British capitalists and "independence" is regarded by Communists as nothing but a mockery. As in India, the Burmese Communists appeal to the economic advantages promised to the peasantry and by their very able conducting of peasants' and workers' unions win over a strong following.

are not to be alienated, but treated with great consideration; they can be liquidated later, when their capital and efficiency is no longer needed. The explanation of this policy is found in the *Programme*, "In view of the backwardness of the economic development of India and of the weakness of the mass organisations of workers, peasants and toiling intelligentsia, our Party does not find it possible at present to carry out socialist transformation in our country. But, our Party regards as quite mature the task of replacing the present anti-democratic and anti-popular government by a new government of People's Democracy created on the basis of a coalition of all democratic anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country, capable of effectively guaranteeing the rights of the people . . ."⁵² And similarly, the Policy after stating that the Government is becoming completely discredited in the eyes of the masses, cautions: "it would be gross exaggeration to say that the country is already on the eve of armed insurrection or revolution, or that civil war is already raging in the country. If we were to read the situation so wrongly, it would lead us into adventurism and giving slogans to the masses out of keeping with the degree of their understanding and consciousness and their preparedness and the Government's isolation. Such slogans would isolate us from the people and hand over the masses to reformist disruptors."⁵³

This policy explains the various coalitions of the Communists with all who are ready to work with them for the overthrow of Congress. It is but a local application of the policy the Popular Front, tried so successfully in Europe during the thirties and constantly revived whenever Communists cannot obtain power directly;⁵⁴ it explains their

⁵² P. 13.

⁵³ P. 8.

⁵⁴ For those ready to learn, there is a significant example in the manner the Communists took over Hungary. In a remarkable frank speech, early in 1952, the present Prime Minister, Matyas Rakosi explained to the Hungarian Workers' Party (Communist) how the Party came to power. At the end of World War II the

readiness to advocate Land Reform and Tenancy Bills of their own making, and the CPI's claim to have given up terrorism, meaning thereby, such individual and isolated terrorism which has been practised so far in this country before the masses are prepared to participate in such acts.

But this does not mean that the Party swings over to "right opportunism", treads this right path of legal reform, and gives up all violence and revolution. On the contrary: "Equally wrong are they who see only the disunity of the popular forces, only the offensive of reaction and advocate a policy of retreat in the name of regrouping of forces, of eschewing all militant actions on the plea that this will invite repression. Tactics based on such an understanding of the situation will lead to betrayal of the masses and surrender before the enemy.

Communists were a small party. They formed the National Independence Front to lull suspicion and win over the middle classes and workers. Land reform was introduced with a maximum holding of 200 acres, leaving most small-holders untouched (this is very similar to the Communist agrarian reforms proposed for India). Industry and banks were gradually nationalised. Though in the 1945 elections, Communists got only 17 per cent of the votes, after joining the Coalition government, they obtained the key posts of Deputy Premier and Minister of the Interior with control of the secret police. By organisation, Communists controlled the trade unions and organised frequent demonstrations in favour of nationalisation. In 1947, Communists 'discovered' a conspiracy and drove the Premier, Ferenc Nagy, leader of the strongest party, the Smallholders' Party, into exile along with a number of others opposed to Communism. The Reds then made a coalition with the next most influential party, the Social Democrats, and then went on to win the next elections. They then again 'discovered' serious charges against the leaders of the Social Democrats and got rid of them, merged the party with the Communists and established their farcical form of 'democracy', the totalitarian one-party rule.

A similar process took place in other eastern and central European countries which are now Soviet Satellites. After working up popular censure against corruption, a 'Popular Front' was

"We have to lead the struggles of the people in the context of a sober evaluation of the situation. While it should not lead us into adventurism, we must also not forget that the crisis is not being solved but is growing. Hence, we cannot take a leisurely attitude and behave as if no deep crisis is moving the people and furious struggles are not looming ahead. Because instruction and civil war do not exist, some would like to move and work as if they are living in a democracy with rights and liberties and nothing need be done to protect the Party and the leadership of mass organisations from onslaughts of the law run mad. With such an outlook, we shall get smashed and will be able to build nothing."⁵⁵ There must be no adventurism, but neither must well co-ordinated movements of 'militant action', i.e., violence, be given up; it is only where the masses are not prepared that such measures are to be shunned. And if the masses are not ready for revolt, this must not be ascribed to governmental repression alone, for "This weakness of the mass movement is due, above all, to

organised: in Rumania, the National Democratic Bloc, in Bulgaria, the Fatherland Front, in Yugoslavia, the People's Front, in Czechoslovakia, the National Front. Through this party, Communists joined a coalition government, secured important positions within the government and then forced other parties to accept Communist leadership. The leaders of parties opposing the Reds, were 'exposed and unmasked' resulting in retirement, exile, imprisonment, or execution. Since the Social Democrats often could not be beaten down in this way, they were forced to make a coalition with the Communists and were thus subdued. When this process is over, faked "free" elections were held and the Communists gained full power.

The CPI is now following the same policy here with its United Democratic Fronts, roping in not only other parties to the extreme left, but also others such as the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party in the South. Will these parties learn a lesson from history before it is too late?

⁵⁵ Policy, pp. 8-9.

the weakness of our Party and the division in the camp of progressive forces." ⁵⁶

Such tactics and strategy demand that "united mass organisations of the working class" be built up, and "the existing split in the working class movement . . . must be overcome at all costs in the shortest possible time. . . ." ⁵⁷ The working class movement must be united with that of the peasants so that the two work in unison, the former, however, fulfilling "the role of the leadership of the people."

Since the Communist bogus Peace Movement has brought in such handsome dividends elsewhere, the CPI considers the building up of such a movement in this country "One of the key tasks that faces us in defence of the people." ⁵⁸ Since the present Government is under the influence of imperialist warmongers, the CPI will "fight for a pact of peace", which, one is left to understand, will align India with the Communist powers.

All these tasks "call for the most intense, patient and daily work . . . continuous agitation" adaptations to local conditions, "a combination of various forms of struggles", and "a net work of organisations", in order to overthrow the present regime and put the CPI in control of the whole country.

* * * *

Such is the policy of the CPI. Success in the elections, the continued food-shortage, the five years of drought in the South, shortage of electricity, the necessary slowness of Government land reform, the inexperience of a young democracy, unemployment, corruption among officials, the bungling of government contracts, the able exploitation of every conceivable kind of grievance, all contributed to the growing strength of the Communist Party of India, while among events outside the country, no opportunity, ranging

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 9.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 10.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 11.

from the Korean War to the Olympic Games, is missed to extoll in the people's eyes the supremacy of the Communist way of life.

For those versed in Marxism the plan is both clear and orthodox. Marx himself advocated a judicious mixture of revolution and reform; he would have as strongly condemned the actions of some of his Indian followers as he condemned the "left" sectarians and right opportunists of his own day. Lenin, too, ably manipulated theory and practice. Indian Communists have been instructed to learn from him that one cannot bring about a Communist regime overnight, and that good use must be made of bourgeois capitalists, specially among the peasantry, to prepare the way for a complete Communist triumph. The Bolshevik revolution succeeded in Russia despite the smallness in size of the real proletariat, the industrial workers; it has succeeded in China where, if anything the proletariat was even less influential than in Russia, and where the peasantry were the vast majority and the deciding factor, though both in the case of Russia and of China the influence of the Red Army should not be overlooked. India, too, is predominantly an agricultural country and it is evident that the general strategy of attack runs along the same lines as that which was successful in the two other agricultural countries, Russia and China; though, for the moment, the example of the latter draws more attention, both because it is more recent and because China is a sister Asian country. (The fact that Russia is largely Asian does not seem to have attracted any attention in India nor does Moscow use this line of approach.)

The tactics of the CPI must be adapted to "the maturity of the crisis, the degree of unification of the peasant masses and their mood, the strength and influence of the Party, and other factors."⁵⁹ A successful and necessary piece of strategy—since the CPI, unlike China, has no Red Army—has been to "fight the parliamentary elections and elections

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 10.

in every sphere where the broad strata of the people can be mobilised and their interests defended.”⁶⁰ Lenin had already laid down the general outlines of how Communists, in such a situation as the CPI now finds itself, must learn to make compromises: “To tack, make agreements, zigzags, retreats and so on,” and infiltrate into bourgeois institutions: parliament, trade unions and the like. By forming a “United Front”, and entering Parliament, the CPI is putting this advice into practice.

We in India are now in what Communists term the pre-revolutionary stage. Should they by their present emphasis on the agrarian question manage to win over a large section of the peasantry, and, as a consequence of this, considerably increase their power in Parliament, the time will be considered ripe for the revolution. Whether *energetic* measures will be taken in time to stem the danger and cut at its roots is an urgent and burning problem. A legion of tasks needs to be done; they can neither all be done at once, nor do they all admit of an easy or early solution—some will take years to solve. Since there are not enough resources to meet all the problems at once, rather than scatter meagre wealth over a large area with little result, what is needed is energetic action in one major field, an action that will both meet the essential needs of the countries and check the Communist menace. This field is most obviously the agrarian scene which is both the source of most of our economic difficulties and at the same time the key to their solution. There are none of our problems which are insoluble, none which determined effort could not overcome. But the greatest enemy to national progress is inertia and shirking of hard work by taking refuge in a plethora of speeches in a manner that is reminiscent of a newly opened soda-bottle. Discussion we must have—one of the reasons we attack Communism is precisely to retain freedom of speech—but discussion should not become an

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 9.

end in itself. In this we can learn from the Communists for whom thought and speech are for action.

While there is no need for undue pessimism, the kind of cheap optimism found in some quarters should be avoided; its empty victories recoil on the heads of its sponsors. If told the real facts and not seduced by gilt-edged promises, the larger and more stable sections of the public will realise that heaven cannot be brought down on earth and that consequently, patience and hard work are required by all to achieve a reasonable average of well-being for the whole community. The common man is reasonable if he is given the necessary data to judge by; he reacts unfavourably when he discovers he has been bluffed by superficial optimists. Since the common man in India is usually a peasant, and since peasants are usually hard-headed and practical, he will judge men and their promises by what they do. He will not turn Communist unless he feels convinced that this ideology is doing something more for him than anyone else. The peasant is a traditionalist and naturally turns to the established order for help in his difficulties. Hence, if the Government actually *does* something *substantial* for the common man and he is made to feel that more will really be done as soon as more resources are available, he will not be won over to Communism.

A. Nevett.

(concluded)

SOME RECENT STRIKES

(continued)

The Workman and his Job

These are possibilities the adjudicators refrained from indicating. They failed to observe how the threat of retrenchment unnerves a workman and lowers his capacity to produce. Every other possibility of decreasing the costs of the firm should first be explored before discharging an employee on the grounds of his being an extra hand. Labour solidarity among workmen resents such ruthless surgery and the gain in lowered costs of production is offset by increased enmity towards management. How best to get labour and management to co-operate and utilize that co-operation for the highest good of the Community is the fundamental problem in the industrial world at present. It is the problem of instilling the right attitudes into the minds of both workmen and employers towards each other. Until the employer and society as well become keenly aware of the fundamental thought processes and attitudes of the labouring man in relation to his job and earnestly seek to satisfy them, the difficulties that distress and disorganise the world will continue to exercise their baneful influence. Men cannot be treated like parts of a machine or economic units of labour. Each of them is 'unique' in a very special sense, and because our lop-sided and insane society has no use for them, they cannot just be thrown on the scrap-heap and allowed to rot. Society must make an effort to give each and everyone of them an opportunity to cultivate his best self. And since the best part of a man's life in our days is spent in toiling over his job, it is in the environment of the job itself that he must find the opportunities to progress and self-perfection.

The Civil Defence Workers, Poona.

There are some 34,000 Civil Defence Service workers who are engaged in the Defence Industry of the Government of India. Most of the men live in Poona and work in

Kirkee and Dehu Road, the two largest centres where the factories are situated. Kirkee and Dehu Road are 4 and 17 miles respectively distant from Poona. Recently the workmen of one of the factories were threatened with retrenchment. Their works' union decided to strike work unless the retrenched men were taken back. The unions in the other workshops gradually decided to go on a sympathetic strike unless the threat of retrenchment was wholly removed from all the units.

The Strike

Most of the Unions are under the influence of the Socialist Party, and their president is Jai Prakash Narayan. Besides indignation over the retrenchment, the Unions also made two other demands. One of these was that those of the men who lived outside the city area of Poona should be given the same advantageous travelling allowance as those living within. Poona and its environs should be considered a B area and the T.A. should be raised accordingly. The second was a demand for the implementation of the Kalianwalla Report. The Kalianwalla Committee had inspected the factories and noted the grievances of the Civil Defence Workmen over a year ago. Unfortunately while preparing his Report, Mr. Kalianwalla suddenly expired, and nothing more was heard of the Report. The workmen had pinned great hopes on its publication, and their disappointment was keen when they gradually realised that government seemed to have shelved the Report.

It was on these three counts that the unions decided to go on strike. The vote to strike was enthusiastically taken though not all the men were behind their representatives in the union on this important matter. The point is that since the unions have never bothered to build up a strike fund, the workmen and their families have to starve or to live on their own small savings while the strike is on. Those who find it difficult to do so sometimes ask the pickets to allow them to enter the factory and work in order to earn

at least a day's salary. And if they have large families, they are often permitted to do so.

But in the heat of the moment, there are few workmen who do not side enthusiastically with the union's verdict. Many of them especially the younger men without families look upon the strike as a free holiday. It is only when they resume work and receive a much smaller salary at the end of the month or even at the end of a couple of weeks, that they realise that their holiday has been an expensive one.

This was what actually happened in Poona. The strike did not last for much more than three weeks in those units which were the first to be affected by the retrenchment. A few large meetings were held. Some of the union representatives went flying to Delhi to see the Defence Minister. Promises were made by government that the demands of the workers would be looked into and the workers were persuaded to go back to work. Finally the union leaders fixed a day for the men to resume work, and thus the strike came to an inglorious end.

Gains?

What have the strikers gained? There were wild rumours circulating among the men that government had acceded to all their requests. As a matter of fact the only thing the strikers can be sure of is that the Kalianwalla Report is soon to be published. The strike may have hastened its publication by a few days, but beyond that they have really gained nothing. Perhaps as a token strike, the strikers may have brought their grievances forcefully to the attention of government. But could not this purpose have been achieved without all the attendant suffering of so many days' loss of pay. If the unions had been well organised with a large strike fund and perhaps even a stores to supply the men's needs during the strike, then even the mere threat of a strike would have achieved much more than an unorganised show of force built up on mass hysteria. The employer knows that he can bide his time because the men cannot hold out for long. And when the employer is the

government as in the present case, then the employee stands still less chance of making his employer take notice. In the Defence Industry, government can always rely on military assistance to get itself out of a jam.

There are so many strikes in India that follow the same pattern. There is great enthusiasm at the beginning, a show of fierce anger, eager picketting, much self-sacrifice; but within three or four weeks' time, these emotions fizzle out under the numbing pain of hunger and distress. The men are eager to go back to work, and the unions after having made some show of agreement with management solemnly declare the strike at an end. One can hardly call this a strike; it is often a mere farce, a put-up job, to make the men believe that the union is not quite dead but is fighting on their behalf.

The Bank Strike

The majority of the Bank employees involved in the strike were middle class people, who have been badly hit by the inflationary trends produced by the last great war and the hard times the country is passing through. They have had to suffer much from the steep rise in the cost of living. Labour in the factories has been amply compensated for upward spiralling prices, but the majority of workmen live very simple lives and their needs are meagre compared to those of the middle class employee in a bank. A tradition of rugged individualism and perhaps a touch of snobishness have prevented members of the latter class from uniting to strengthen their bargaining position in relation to that of their employers.

But in the painful school of experience they have learnt that without unity among themselves, they stand no chance of survival, let alone improvement, in a keenly competitive world. The matriculate technician often earns a higher income than the graduate clerk. The evidence before the Industrial Tribunal clearly revealed that where Trade Unionism in certain banks was strong, the men could lay

down their terms to the banking companies. But in the absence of a strong union and in out-of-the-way places the employees had to work long hours on small salaries. With the growing consciousness of the rights of labour and the increasing economic and social distress, the bank employees have been groomed in their new role. But the question is still whether violence and class conflict or sweet reasonableness and wiser counsels will prevail, for the movement has inevitably become entangled in the coils of conflicting political ideologies. The unions have come under the influence of political parties and much of the recent trouble stemmed equally from economic distress as from the growing belief in class war.

Demands

The employees asked for shorter hours of work per week, 36 to be precise, as granted by the Sen Award ; an increase in the dearness allowance, to cope with the rise in prices, and medical relief by the banks which can afford to give it. Since Banking is now on the Union list, some sort of a common code of employment conditions in banks all over the country is thought desirable by the government. The decisions of the Industrial Tribunal are expected to pave the way towards establishing a national norm of this sort. Because the matter requires much consideration and will take some time, the Industrial Tribunal gave out an interim award.

The Interim Award

The interim award is an answer to the more pressing needs of a large section of bank employees, who requested that at least three points of the Sen Award against which the management of the banks had appealed should be implemented. In the first place the Sen Award had granted the bank employees 36 hours of work per week ; secondly, it had fixed a favourable specified formula for increase in dearness allowance as prices rose ; and thirdly, it had drawn up a code of medical relief for bank employees. Neither of

these three demands were allowed by the Tribunal. Instead of 36 hours, the Tribunal has fixed 39 hours per week for the clerical staff, 7 hours per week day and 4 hours per Saturday, exclusive of the lunch recess. It did not see the need for increasing the dearness allowance. Finally while it agreed that social security is not the sole obligation of government but also partly that of the employer, it has laid no new obligations on the management of the banks except to insist that what some of the banks are giving in the way of medical relief should be continued.

Nothing New

The Interim Award has given the men nothing new. Perhaps it has only helped to prevent the exploitation of those bank employees who were compelled to work as many as 54 hours a week in some places. Despite their failure to secure their demands, the men are back at work. But the strike was a serious one and deeply affected the commercial life of the community. The strikers however had no staying power, because they had never bothered to build up a strike fund. The strike has brought out for the first time the strength of the white-collared employee when united as a group, and has also focussed public attention of the plight in which many of the middle class in India find themselves today. They certainly need help. They need security and a better income. Above all they need guidance; they need to realise the part they must play to secure that opportunity for a full life they so eagerly desire. A mere increase of wage is not enough. A new social set-up, a better structural basis of society is what is needed. It is by their united efforts that they must build up a new industrial world that will fully satisfy their rational needs and aspirations.

Morals and the Strike

Since this article deals with strikes, it might be worth while to remind people who are interested in the question and have to take decisions in this matter that reason itself

demands the fulfilment of certain conditions before a strike may be declared. These conditions are :

1. There must be a serious and a just reason for a strike.
2. There must be a reasonable chance of winning the strike.
3. The strike must be conducted peaceably. Workers may not wreck the factory during the strike, because the factory does not belong to them.
4. Before the men go on strike, they should use all possible methods of coming to some agreement with the management.
5. The strike must be used as a last resort.

But how often do strikers ever pay heed to the fulfilment of these conditions ? Workmen have obligations towards their own families, their employers and the community at large. These are too easily forgotten in the heat of the moment, but the successful strike depends in great part on their observance.

A. Fonseca.

HOUSING

(Continued)

While admitting, at the All-Indian Housing Conference held in Delhi in August 1952, that a Central Government subvention of Rs. 9 crores in subsidies and loans, was inadequate, the Union Minister of Central Works, Housing and Supply, added : " I think that everyone also appreciates the fact that it is quite an appreciable chunk found out of the Central revenues, having regard to the prevailing conditions, especially in a sphere which ought to be more primarily the responsibility of the State Governments, local bodies, and not least of the employers of labour themselves." It is, in fact, common knowledge that the lack of financial resources, whether real or apparent, has proved the greatest obstacle to any effective housing scheme in the country. On the one hand, the construction of residential dwellings for

low income persons is no more an attractive investment, and on the other, these very people have neither the money to build their own houses, nor is their average income sufficient to cover the rents charged for more sanitary and better built houses.

Financial difficulties, as has been observed in a former discussion on this subject, crippled the efforts of the Industrial Housing Sub-Committee, in 1946, to find a solution to the housing shortage in the country. A similar fate overtook the attempt of the Labour Ministry in 1949, to build houses for industrial workers in all important industrial centres. "Under this scheme two-thirds of the capital was to be provided as a loan by the Centre and the rest by State Governments, or by an employer sponsored by the State Government. Bearing no interest the loan was to be repaid in 25 years through a sinking fund, contributions to which were to begin within 2 years. The recurring expenses of $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on capital cost, including 3 per cent on one-third of the capital or 1 per cent on the entire capital cost, 2 per cent on the sinking fund and $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on repairs and maintenance were to be repaid by the employers to the extent of 3 per cent. The other $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent was to be paid by employees as rent subject to a maximum of 20 per cent of their wages. The average cost of constructing one house was reckoned to be Rs. 4,000, varying from Rs. 7,500 in Bombay and Calcutta to Rs. 3,000 in less important industrial areas" (*Supplement to Capital*, December 20, 1951). While the tripartite structure of responsibility between the State, the industrialist and the worker, as adopted in this scheme, is an asset to any healthy system of industrial relations, it was unfortunate that the cost of each house could not be kept down, and so the whole scheme was abandoned because the respective contributions of each party proved to be excessively high.

The financial scheme to carry through the housing policy of the National Planning Commission does not appear to operate in less difficult financial conditions. The scheme keeps to the tripartite structure of responsibility,

between the State, the employer and the worker, for the national housing policy, and it plans the establishment of a Housing Fund with an opening capital of Rs. 12 crores. This initial capital is to be made up from contributions coming from the Government, the employers and the workers. The share of each party being Rs. 3 crores ; and the other Rs. 3 crores being obtained by way of a loan from the Union Government. The employers' contribution would be estimated according to each one's wages-bill and would represent $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of that bill, including dearness allowance in those areas where the scheme applied, and this contribution would be interest free. The workers' contribution would operate on the basis of compulsory saving and would represent $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of their total wages. This contribution would carry interest at 3 per cent and be repaid in 40 years by means of a sinking fund at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. In the same way, the contribution from the Union Government would bear no interest, and would be repaid by means of a sinking fund over 60 years at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Representatives of the workers, employers, the State and Union Governments would make up a National Housing Board which would administer the Housing Fund. According to the Planning Commission the economic rent of each house was estimated at Rs. 13-9-0 ; while the rent charged and calculated at 15 per cent of the average monthly wage of Rs. 66 per worker comes to only Rs. 10. The difference of Rs. 3-9-0 is to be made up by the employers. The obvious criticism of the whole scheme did not help to make it popular : many employers felt that they would be expected to bear an unjust share of the employers' contribution ; further, with the rise in the average daily cost per worker and the need of replacements and modernisation of machinery, there is the danger that any extra financial burden placed upon the employer would automatically be passed on to the consumer in the shape of higher prices, and thus tend to set up deflationary movements.

The housing problem in Latin American countries* is beset with difficulties not unlike those met with in India, and therefore it is instructive to examine the various methods used in those countries, to secure financial resources for the needs of housing. As in India, Latin American countries suffer from low man-hour productivity and consequently a low level of annual per capita income ; a high birth rate ; a rapid and large-scale movement of the population from the country into cities ; an acute shortage of building material and equipment, and in some Latin American countries, natural calamities, such as earthquakes, floods and storms, as we have experienced in this country, have tended to aggravate the seriousness of the housing problem. As may be expected there is no uniform or fixed pattern according to which the financial resources of the continent have been secured for the purpose of constructing low rental houses. Local customs, tradition, the industrial development and sometimes statutory obligations in some countries determine the nature of the means employed to tap financial resources for the local housing policy. The most common means are co-operative societies ; housing development programmes of business and commercial firms ; government action through a Housing Department and special taxes earmarked for building purposes ; and aided self-help building programmes.

Perhaps, the most extensive housing programme is undertaken by co-operative societies in Colombia. In this Latin American State, "253 out of the 427 registered co-operatives functioning at the end of 1950 provided housing services to their members", while twenty-eight co-operatives for low cost housing, "have built 1,500 urban dwellings during the last four years at a cost of 18 million pesos, and one co-operative is at present undertaking a project of 700 houses in a planned community near Medellin". Business and commercial firms which have undertaken a housing

* *Housing Problems and Policies in Latin America*, International Labour Review, March 1952, pp. 348-378.

programme employ various means to facilitate fiscal resources. Sometimes enterprises with a specified capital and wages-bill have been authorised by government to make deductions in their tax returns on sums spent on housing workers, and the housing expenditure in excess of the allowable deduction for any one year may be carried over to the next year. The exemption, by law, of all housing projects for workers, and the free import of building material and special equipment, are other means used by the government to encourage employers and industry to provide housing accommodation for workers. Several oil companies in some Latin American countries, have set up a healthy housing programme by means of collective agreements. In Venezuela, "by 1949 over 8,000 individual houses, blocks of flats and bachelor units had been constructed by oil companies." In other countries, collective agreements in the oil industry contain provisions for the housing accommodation of employees.

Despite these schemes and the many mortgage finance banks in the country, the general low average per capita income of the greater part of the people leaves many families without proper housing accommodation. Under these circumstances, the governments of many Latin American countries have had to undertake public housing schemes to help solve the great housing shortage in the country. The Workers' Housing Fund of the Chilean Government is an instructive example. A Council representing a wide range of national interests governs the Fund. The working capital is provided for, partly from the national budget and partly from investments made by industry and mining firms. Thus industrial and mining concerns which earn more than 50,000 pesos a year are required to invest 5 per cent of their annual profits in the Workers' Housing Fund; other companies are given the option of investing their profits directly in workers' housing schemes. The Chilean municipalities, moreover, are required, by law, to set aside five per cent of their liquid assets for the construction of houses for wage earners and em-

ployees. "During 1949 the Workers' Housing Fund was responsible for the construction of 2,700 buildings, costing 360 million pesos and capable of housing 14,450 persons. Another 4,859 houses were under construction in 1950." Costa Rica is solving its housing problem by using a method which, at once, tends to provide more housing accommodation for its people, and to train workers for the building trade. Prison labour is employed to turn out prefabricated dwelling units. A simple design is adopted and the work is done by prisoners on a voluntary basis, under the supervision of engineers and architects of the Government Housing Department. The finished prefabricated units are transported to the site where trained workers, also prisoners, erect the structure. Each of these workers receives a small wage divided into three equal amounts: one part is given to the worker's family; another part is used to improve his diet and the third part is given to the prisoner as an extra allowance. Moreover, the prisoner's sentence is reduced by a day for each four days of work, and "at the end of his sentence he has been trained as a skilled building worker, thus adding to the country's supply of skilled manpower".

Rural housing programmes are undertaken in some Latin American countries on the basis of an aided self-help system which approximates to that aimed at by the recently begun Community Projects in India. In Puerto Rico, the Social Programmes Administration directs the rural aided self-help housing policy which provides unskilled landless peasants and farm workers with plots of land on perpetual lease in which garden crops can be grown; the Administration also undertakes to move the settlers' huts and shacks to the allotted plots and then it helps them organize an "improvement co-operative". This co-operative society by technical assistance and small loans brings in the water-supply, looks after the sanitary requirements, produces building blocks and even erects new houses for the settlers. "The finished houses of 30 square metres of area with three rooms can be built at a cost of only \$ 300 (U.S.) per house, 1950 figures". Whole communities are sometimes organized on

a basis of self-help for the purpose of solving their housing problems. Twelve to fifteen families are formed into a unit or group. They meet to discuss and study the requirements of the community thus helping to establish the proper atmosphere for the success of the undertaking. The group is then divided into smaller units with a minimum of three persons, so that each day there are at least three to work on the project. The first job is to erect a shed in which is installed a simple and easily worked concrete-block mixing machine, and where other building material may be stored. Then, the heads of families under supervisors lent by Government begin to produce concrete blocks; when this is finished a reinforced concrete foundation is laid. "Experience in Puerto Rico has proved that if proper methods and techniques are used the whole-hearted co-operation and interest of unskilled farm labourers and their families can be obtained and maintained throughout the necessary time to complete the project. Though their efficiency may be low, there is enough ability to develop the necessary skills." While the Puerto Rico Projects are neither as comprehensive nor as ambitious as those now begun in India, their advantage lies in their limited size which makes it much more easy to handle the human element on which the success of all such projects depends.

Even this superficial and necessarily inadequate survey of housing problems in Latin American countries opens up new lines of thought which may prove fruitful in solving the housing shortage in this country. Given the low average per capita income of the majority of our population, the difficulties of land acquisition and the scarcity of building material and equipment, the lead given, in this sphere, by the Union Government is all to the good. Yet, housing is a sphere, as the Union Minister of Central Works, Housing and Supply, pointed out, "which ought to be more primarily the responsibility of the State Governments, local bodies and not the least, of the employers of labour themselves". That State Governments can rise to the occasion has been amply proved by the manner in which they have met and

dealt with the rehabilitation of evacuees after the partition of the country in August 1947. In most advanced industrial countries, today, Labour Welfare includes decent living conditions for workers, and so there is a growing conviction that industrialists and employers may not disclaim all responsibility for the decent housing of their workers. In some countries, State legislation leaves employers no option ; they are forced to provide decent housing conditions for their labour out of profits earned, or by a system of easy loans, or the construction of houses which are rented on easy terms to their workers. It is a sad commentary on the attitude of many employers towards their employees, that whereas they find sufficient funds for depreciation and replacement of machinery and commercial buildings, they fight shy of any policy which entails an expenditure to house their workers in buildings worthy of human beings ! Labour Unions, in the Latin American countries we are told, have "not generally entered the field of house building", but there is nothing in the nature of Trade Union activity to preclude the terms of collective bargaining from including some provision for the housing of union members. In fact, the more our Indian Trade Unions realise that merely to fight for "higher wages" is but one aim of such associations, the better will they serve the interests of the working classes. In order to provide housing for the staff and workers of municipalities, the practice of some Latin American municipalities, and in particular, that of Colombia may well be recommended. Municipalities having a tax receipt from 25,000 to 50,000 pesos are expected to set aside 3 per cent ; those having a tax receipt from 50,000 to 100,000 pesos must earmark 4 per cent, and those having more than 100,000 pesos must spend 5 per cent on housing.

While everyone is perfectly aware that in the immediate future there are many demands of pressing urgency on the country's limited resources, few will deny that unless there is to be chaos, an order of priority in the distribution of these resources must be strictly prescribed. Now, in terms of national welfare, it seems evident that once our

food supply has been assured no other commitment should take priority over housing for the people. The Catholic citizen cannot forget that the provision of houses is something more than the mere mechanical process of erecting buildings. The home is the heart and core of family life and the building of the home is one of the means of fulfilling God's purpose. No less an ideal is conducive to the accomplishment of so vital a task.

C. C. Clump.

PUBLIC MORALS

Periodically our dailies denounce the obscenities displayed on bookstalls; the initiative regularly comes from correspondents, not from editors, who run objectionable advertisements side by side with such denunciations. When denouncing immorality it is customary to put the blame on youths, their frivolity and licentiousness; yet on closer study one would come to notice that the guilty ones are the adults. Adults, those who run such objectionable stalls, who write and publish such books and pictorials, who run or frequent houses of ill-fame, who produce unhealthy films, ballets and theatricals. Adults, the writers and publishers of anticonceptionist books; and adults, the statesmen who preface them. Adults, the preachers of free-love; adults, the purveyors of lust; adults, the civil authorities who tolerate or even favour such evil and corruption. The responsibility does not lie so much with inexperienced youths as with the grown-ups and with society as a whole. The evil is not only individual, it is equally social, social because it is born of modern manners and because it corrupts society. It is a case of *lèse-société*.

As Daniel-Rops wrote, "the stench of death which poisons our present times is also a stench of flesh". It is striking, he goes on to remark, that these present times are

days when death threatens multitudes with misery, hunger, war, and days when sexual obsession weighs most heavily on our feelings and our behaviour. Possibly we are not greater sinners than our ancestors, but what has been perverted since their times is men's moral opinion. In any period of history that is marked with deterioration in moral judgement, the same features reappear; life is not respected neither at its beginning nor at its end; men take to enjoyment and to death according to the sway of impulses and perversions. Intellectualism, sexual violence and thirst for blood are used as opiates by those civilisations that have lost the sense of real life. The sexual obsession which afflicts modern society and is mysteriously associated with the threat of impending catastrophe should be taken as a premonitory symptom. Is not modern society which makes much of the flesh and little of death going to be judged and punished through and in its animality?

This judgement and sentence of death may come in diverse ways, through exhaustion and disease, murder and suicide, civil war and international conflict. It comes insidiously, non-violently, through national sterility, sterility of body, of mind and soul: depopulation of races eaten up with what the Latins called "*taedium vitae*" (disgust of life); degeneracy of mental acuity and intellectual effort; apathy of will which finds no response to any outside challenge. Judgement and sentence may come to a young man who has entered the political field with a talent for disinterested leadership and who is fooled into fornication or adultery by putrid politicians who then have him at their mercy; he may be allowed to proceed in his career or even pushed to the fore, but he will remain the prisoner of blackmailers and his party will unconsciously be his and their victim. So that sex which is a symbol of fecundity and social service becomes a cesspool of futility and decay. As Mgr. Fulton Sheen wrote, "those who separate sex and spirit are rehearsing for death".

What makes the evil more disastrous than at any previous period is that it is met with indulgence by society,

propagated in the open and even made fashionable in certain groups under the blasphemous epithet of "beautiful sin". In the words of Pius XI "it is not only in secret or in the darkness but openly and without any sense of shame that the sanctity of marriage is treated with derision and contempt. The spoken and written word, theatrical performances of every kind, novels, love stories, humorous tales, films, broadcast talks—all the latest inventions of modern science are used to this end. On the other hand divorce, adultery, and the most shameful vices are glorified or at any rate depicted in such colours as to make them appear free from all blame or infamy" (*Casti Connubii*).

Twenty years later (March 26, 1950) Pius XII gave vent to a similar denunciation of the evil which had grown worse: "Veiling the ugliness and ignominy of the evil under the veneer of art, esthetics and flimsy refinement . . . or giving full sway to a morbid craving for violent sensations and novel manners of debauchery, the encomium of misbehaviour has come to be accepted in society and to enter into the rhythm of economic and social life, turning into a profitable industry what is one of the worst fostering sores and infamous weaknesses of mankind".

"At times people appeal to theories to justify the most degrading deeds of this moral decay, and appeal to a false type of humanism or to a feeling of compassion which excuses sin in order to facilitate the fall and ruin of others".

An appeal is often made to science or rather to pseudo-science. It is argued that the sexual instinct is an irresistible urge of nature. Facts however are there to show that if a healthy man cannot live without satisfying his natural hunger, he can keep in good health without ever giving way to his sexual impulses. It is not the chaste youths that people our asylums or frequent V.D. clinics. Nor could one well regard as a natural impulse the abnormal craving of men who arouse their passions by dint of suitable stimulants or intoxicating pleasures. Chastity is quite possible even under modern conditions and it would be made much easier

were those conditions drained of their sexual obsession. But the purveyors of sin find it all to their advantage to create the prejudice that morality is impossible or unmanly ; and that the struggle is useless since defeat is inevitable. In the moral sphere as on the battle-field the saying of Marshal Foch is true to life : " One is defeated only from the moment one admits defeat ".

Still more often art is appealed to as a pretext for moral laxity in novels or pictorials. The pretext is bandied about so commonly that the number of " artists " must have grown as much as the number of fools and the masses have developed their esthetic talent faster than their literacy. Let us not be fooled by catchwords. Esthetic pleasure is different and divorced from sexual pleasure ; it is even hampered by the pleasant titillations of pornography. Morality does not make art easy, it takes away what passes as its easy means but does elevate its tone and achievements.

(To be continued)

A. Lallemand.



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Social Action is a monthly devoted to social problems, and is under the direction of the I. I. S. O.

The Editorial Board do not necessarily endorse the individual views of contributors.

The yearly subscription is Rs. 4 or 6 s. 8 d., or \$ 1.50.

Manuscripts, subscriptions, advertisements and remittances should be addressed to *The Manager, Social Action*, 4, Boat Club Road, POONA 1.

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The I. I. S. O. was started at Poona on January 6, 1951 and is at present staffed by the following members of the Society of Jesus:

Rev. J. D'Souza, *Director*, Rev. C. C. Clump, A. Fonseca, A. Lallemand, and A. Nevett.

Edited by A. Lallemand, Indian Institute of Social Order, Poona 1.

Printed and published by A. S. Durairaj, De Nobili Press

Pudur P.O., Madurai.

